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SENATE

REPORT
99-285

LIMITING THE AMOUNT THAT MAY BE EXPENDED BY SENATORS FOR OFFICIAL MAIL COSTS DURING THE REMAINDER OF FISCAL YEAR 1986

APRIL 23 (legislative day, APRIL 21), 1986.—Ordered to be printed

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Mr. MATHIAS, from the Committee on Rules and Administration, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. Res. 374]

The Committee on Rules and Administration to which was referred the resolution (S. Res. 374) limiting the amount that may be expended by Senators for mass mailings during the remainder of fiscal year 1986, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with amendments and recommends that the resolution as amended be agreed to.

PURPOSE

The purpose of S. Res. 374 is to strengthen congressional control over the costs of congressional mail for the remainder of fiscal year 1986 by allocating one-half of the remaining balance among Senators according to the population of their respective States (after setting aside an amount for official mail for committees and officers of the Senate) and by urging the House of Representatives to take similar action with respect to mail sent by Representatives.

BACKGROUND

Congressional mail costs have shown a steady and marked increase in the past decade. Table A sets forth the actual and estimated outlays from the official mail account for the fiscal years 1977 through 1991, as set forth in the Budget submitted by the President of the United States for fiscal years 1979 through 1987:

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TABLE A.—OUTLAYS FROM THE OFFICIAL MAIL ACCOUNT, 1977 THROUGH 1991

[In millions of dollars]

	Election years	Nonelection years
Fiscal year:		
1977		60.7
1978	47.0	
1979		37.9
1980	64.4	
1981		43.4
1982	97.0	
1983		86.5
1984	111.1	
1985		86.7
1986 est.	146.2	
1987 est.		137.0
1988 est.	154.1	
1989 est.		103.7
1990 est.	166.6	
1991 est.		111.2

Sources: (1) 1977 through 1985: from the budgets submitted by the President for fiscal years 1979 through 1987, respectively. (2) 1986: U.S. Postal Service letter dated February 19, 1986. (3) 1987 through 1991: From the President's Budget for fiscal year 1987.

Special problems exist with respect to fiscal year 1986 for which a deficiency of over $50 million has been projected, based on outgoing mail volume in the first quarter. The situation for fiscal year 1986 is set forth in Table B.

TABLE B.—*Status of fiscal year 1986*

	Millions
1. Postal Service estimate as of January 1985	144.0
2. Appropriated	100.0
3. Public Law 99–177 (Gramm-Rudman-Hollings) reduction	−4.3
4. Appropriation after Public Law 99–177 reduction	95.7
5. Postal Service estimate as of February 1986	146.2
6. Deficiency	50.5

Congressional mail operates much like an entitlement program and exhibits the cost control problems of such programs. Postage costs for House and Senate mail are paid from an appropriation account entitled "Official mail costs." (For fiscal year 1987, this account can be seen on page 6d–9 of the Budget of the United States Government, 1987.) The account is administered by the Clerk of the House on behalf of both the House and the Senate. The Clerk sends the Postal Service one-twelfth of the appropriated amount each month. The Postal Service sends the Clerk a statement of the postage costs for each quarter, noting the estimated total cost for the year based on the costs to date and expenditure patterns in previous years. The statements from the Postal Service usually follow the close of the quarter by about 6 to 8 weeks. The delay is due to the fact that costs must be gathered from local post offices throughout the country. In previous years deficiencies have been made up through supplemental appropriations. Under the terms of Public Law 99–177, however, supplementals that are not "deficit neutral" are subject to a point of order that takes a three-fifths vote to override.

Within the Senate, control is exercised through a paper allotment which currently provides Senators with one and one-third

sheets of blank paper per adult constituent per year, except that no Senator receives less than 1.8 million sheets per year. In addition, certain mailings are not charged to the paper allotment. These are: (1) letters to constituents prepared on the Senate's Correspondence Management Systems and using non-individualized (by Senator) Senate stationery; (2) town meeting notices where the Senator (rather than a staff member) will be present; and (3) "Dear Friend" letters sent in response to organized write-in campaigns. Different procedures are used in the House of Representatives, but in neither body is there any charge to members for postage, the most expensive cost of any mailing.

COMMITTEE ACTION

On Wednesday, April 9, 1986, the Committee on Rules and Administration held a hearing on S. Res. 374 and three other measures related to controlling mass-mail costs: S. 2059, S. 2255, and S. 2272. Testimony was received from Senator Quayle, sponsor of S. 2059 and S. 2272, and from Senator Wilson, principal sponsor of S. 2255. On Wednesday, April 16, 1986, the Committee met in mark-up session, agreed to an amendment to S. Res. 374 offered by Senator Ford, agreed to S. Res. 374 as amended, and deferred action on S. 2059, 2255, and 2272.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS

The Committee finds: (1) that current information indicates that the amount in the appropriation account for official mail for fiscal year 1986 is insufficient to cover the costs of such mail for such year; (2) that a supplemental appropriation is both unlikely and not in keeping with the spirit of fiscal restraint manifested by Public Law 99–177, commonly known as Gramm-Rudman-Hollings; (3) that no mechanism currently exists by which individual members of Congress can knowledgably manage their mailings so that aggregate expenses do not exceed the amount available; (4) that such a mechanism should be instituted for the remainder of fiscal year 1986; and (5) that a seven day moratorium on mass-mailings is necessary in order to ascertain the amount remaining for allocation in fiscal year 1986.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 of S. Res. 374 creates a seven-day moratorium on mass-mailings by Senators. The moratorium begins on the date the resolution is agreed to by the Senate. The purpose of the moratorium is to allow a determination to be made of the amount of funds remaining in the appropriation account for official mail.

Section 2 prescribes a procedure for allocating a portion of the remaining balance of the official mail account among individual Senators and states that no costs for official mail may be incurred by a Senator in excess of such allocation. The allocation algorithm is as follows. (1) The balance available is to be determined by the Committee on Rules and Administration by subtracting the amount spent to date from the amount appropriated. The Committee is expected to work with the Postal service in determining such

balance. (2) One-half of the amount determined in step 1 will be considered available for the Senate and one-half available for the House of Representatives. (3) From the amount determined in step 2, an amount determined by the Committee on rules and Administration will be set aside for mailings for committees and officers of the Senate, leaving an amount available for allocation among individual Senators for all official mail. (4) The amount available for allocation among Senators will be allocated according to the population of their respective States.

Section 3 urges the House of Representatives to take similar action.

Section 4 contains definition of terms.

COST ESTIMATE

Cost estimates were not received from the Congressional Budget Office in time for inclusion in the Committee's report. Upon their receipt, the Committee shall report them to the Senate for publication in the Congressional Record.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

In accordance with paragraph 11(b) of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Rules and Administration does not consider that adoption of S. Res. 374 would have any regulatory impact.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

S. Res. 374 makes no changes in existing law.

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